

VERTIGO

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BILL **WILLINGHAM** MARK **BUCKINGHAM** STEVE **LEIALOHA**

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS vertigo.comics.com

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SPRING HAS ARRIVED.





UNTIL THE SPRING

In which bodies accumulate, the sheriff gets a good scolding, war is discussed and a pack of floaters celebrate their first birthday.

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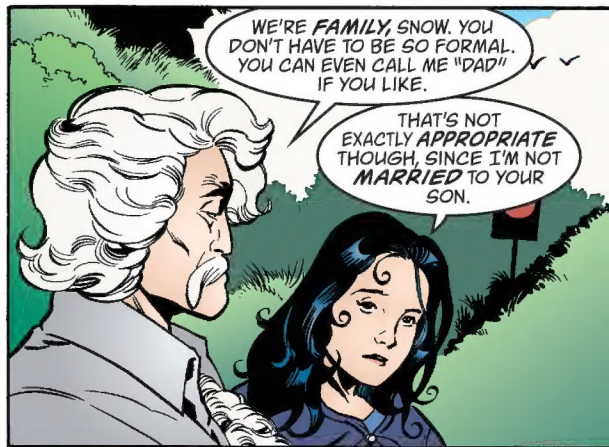
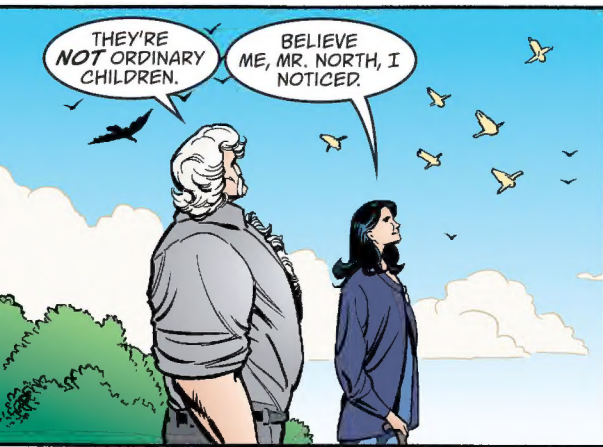
THIS MAKES VICTIM NUMBER FIVE.

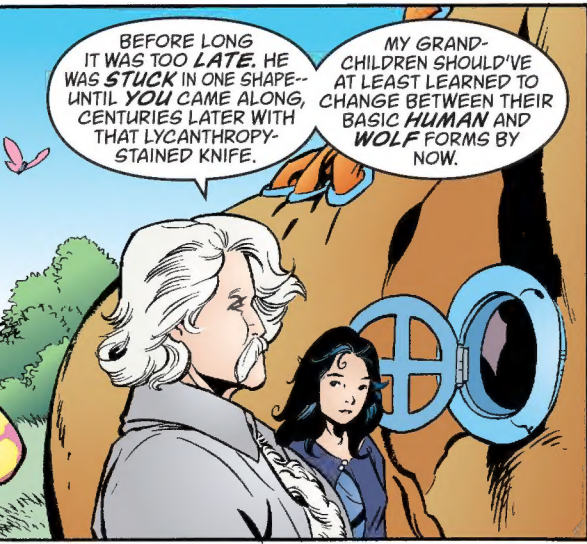
AT LEAST FIVE THAT WE KNOW OF.

YOU SHOULDN'T LET THEM FLY ABOUT LIKE THAT, SNOW.

HOW COULD I STOP THEM, MR. NORTH? THEY LOVE IT.

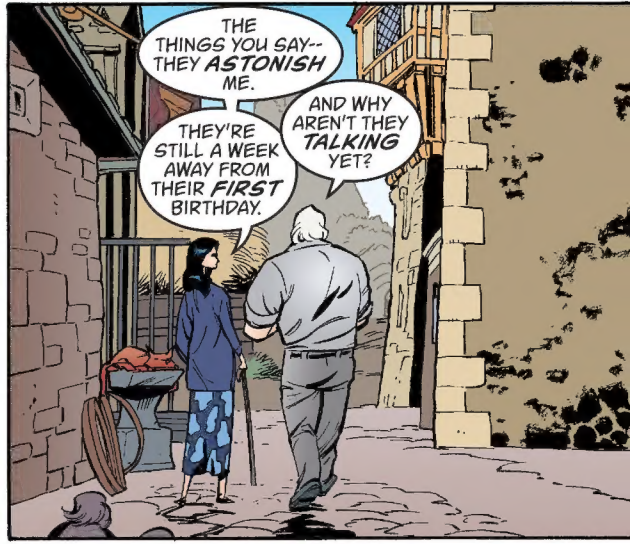
THEY LIVE FOR IT.





BEFORE LONG IT WAS TOO LATE. HE WAS *STUCK* IN ONE SHAPE-- UNTIL *YOU* CAME ALONG, CENTURIES LATER WITH THAT LYCANTHROPY-STAINED KNIFE.

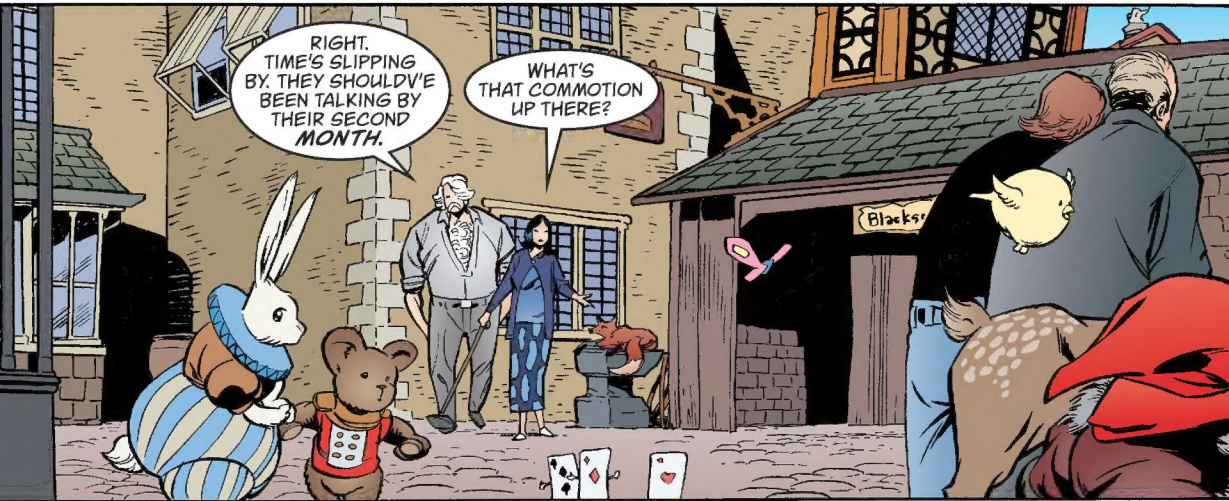
MY GRAND-CHILDREN SHOULD'VE AT LEAST LEARNED TO CHANGE BETWEEN THEIR BASIC *HUMAN* AND *WOLF* FORMS BY NOW.



THE THINGS YOU SAY-- THEY *ASTONISH* ME.

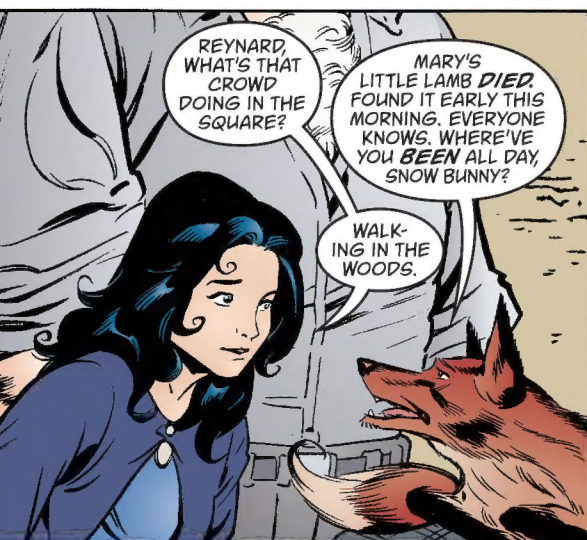
THEY'RE STILL A WEEK AWAY FROM THEIR *FIRST* BIRTHDAY.

AND WHY AREN'T THEY *TALKING* YET?



RIGHT. TIME'S SLIPPING BY. THEY SHOULD'VE BEEN TALKING BY THEIR *SECOND* MONTH.

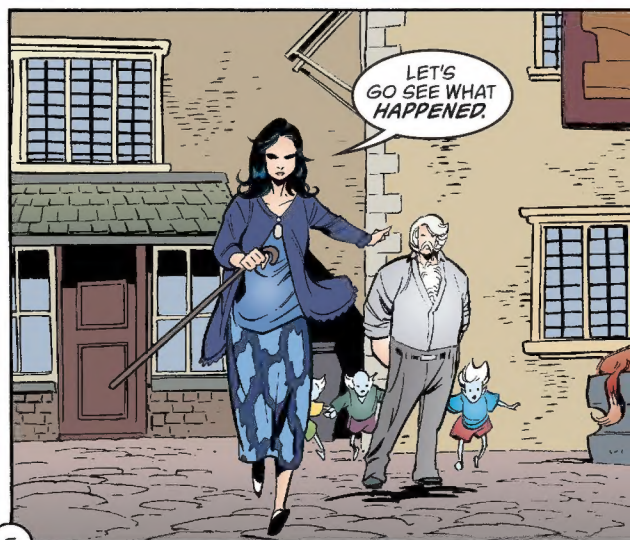
WHAT'S THAT COMMOTION UP THERE?



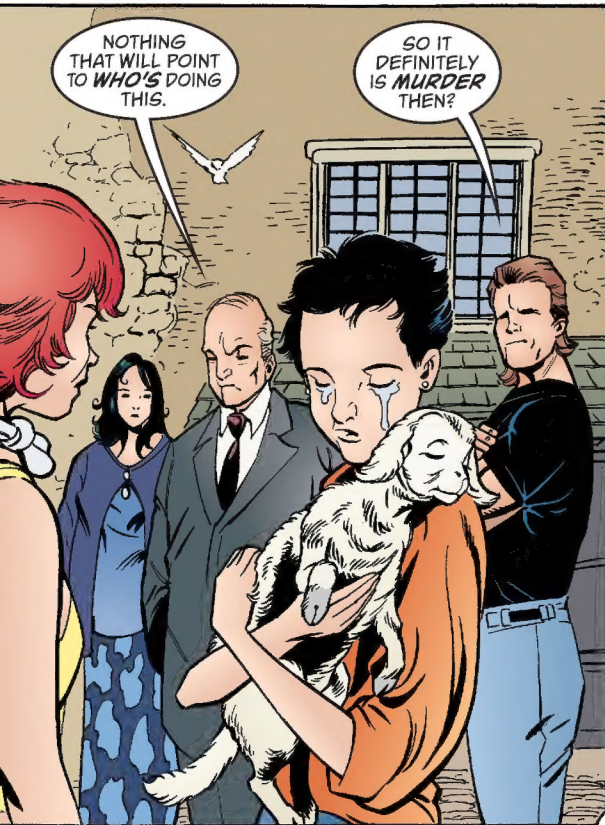
REYNARD, WHAT'S THAT CROWD DOING IN THE SQUARE?

MARY'S LITTLE LAMB *DIED*. FOUND IT EARLY THIS MORNING. EVERYONE KNOWS. WHERE'VE YOU *BEEN* ALL DAY, SNOW BUNNY?

WALKING IN THE WOODS.



LET'S GO SEE WHAT HAPPENED.





INVISIBLE?

QUITE SO, YES.



AH--IT BEGINS TO MAKE SENSE.

BUT *WHY* KILL? HOW DOES IT--?

THEY'RE *FOUL*, WILD THINGS. NOT MUCH MORE THAN *BEASTS*.

BUT LIKE MANY OF MY KIND, THEY LIKE TO *FEED* OFF THE AIR DIRECTLY FROM A PERSON'S LUNGS. IT'S A PARTICULARLY *TASTY* DELICACY FOR SOME OF US.

UNFORTUNATELY, IT CAN *SUFFOCATE* THE VICTIM, IF THE ZEPHYR'S CARELESS OR UN-TRAINED.



THIS ONE SEEMS NOT TO KNOW, OR NOT TO CARE, ABOUT THE *MORTAL* RESULTS OF ITS FEEDING FRENZIES.

WHY HAVE I *NEVER* HEARD OF SUCH A CREATURE?



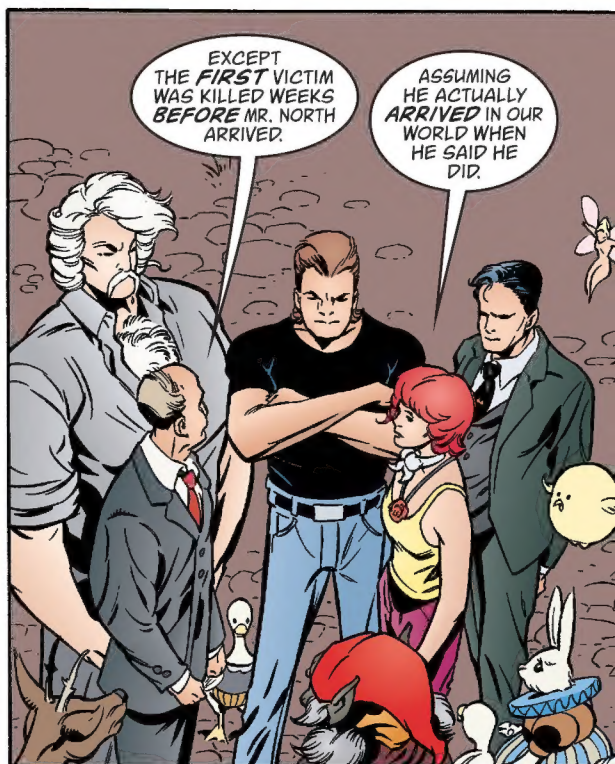
THEY'RE *RARE*--A CORRUPTED VERSION OF MY KIND. SOMETHING OF AN EXTREME *BIRTH DEFECT*, ACTUALLY, WHICH WE TEND TO KILL AT NATIVITY.

BUT SOME DO *SLIP* THROUGH THE NET.



I'M SURPRISED ONE COULD EVEN COME TO EXIST IN THIS MUNDANE WORLD.

UNLESS IT CAME HERE ALONG WITH YOU.



EXCEPT THE **FIRST** VICTIM WAS KILLED WEEKS BEFORE MR. NORTH ARRIVED.

ASSUMING HE ACTUALLY ARRIVED IN OUR WORLD WHEN HE SAID HE DID.



ONE OTHER POSSIBILITY WE SHOULD CONSIDER.

IT'S BEEN MORE THAN A YEAR SINCE THE ADVERSARY'S WOODEN SOLDIER INVASION--WITH **NO** RESPONSE FROM US.



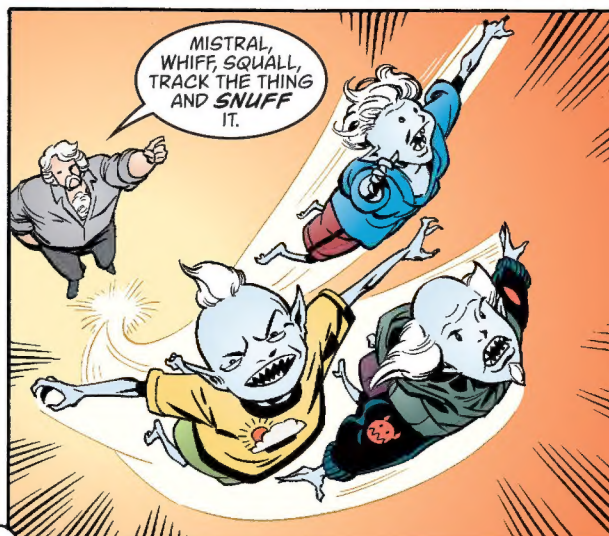
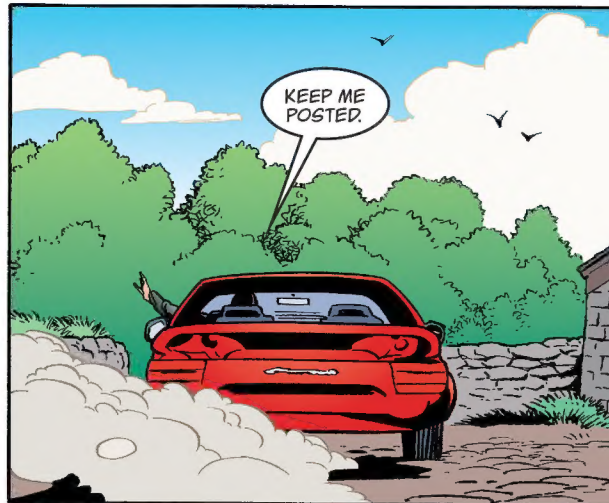
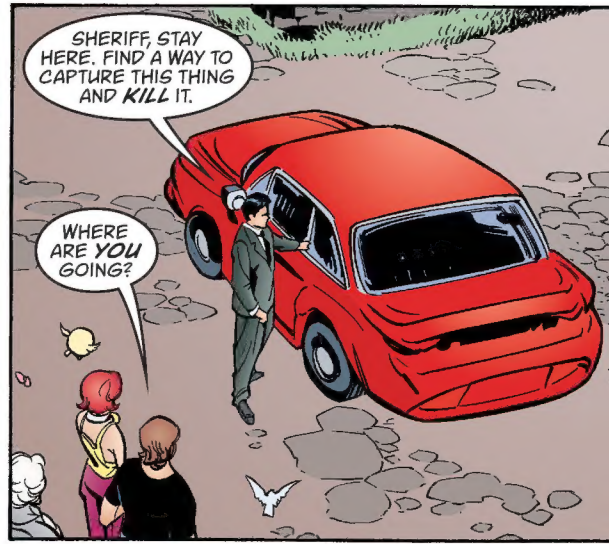
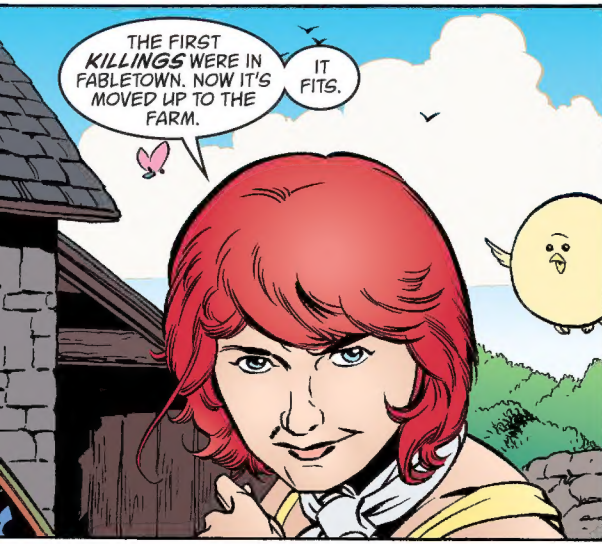
WHO'S TO SAY HE ISN'T **STRIKING** AGAIN--MORE SUBTLY THIS TIME, BY SENDING THE PERFECT **INVISIBLE** ASSASSIN?

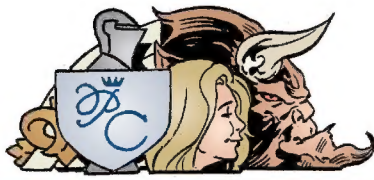
THAT'S POSSIBLE.



WE SHOULD'VE STRUCK BACK **IMMEDIATELY** AFTER THE BATTLE OF FABLETOWN.

WE SHOULD'VE MADE THE ADVERSARY **PAY** A DEAR PRICE FOR HIS DANGEROUS ANTICS--BLOODIED HIS NOSE SO HE'D **HESITATE** TO DO IT AGAIN.

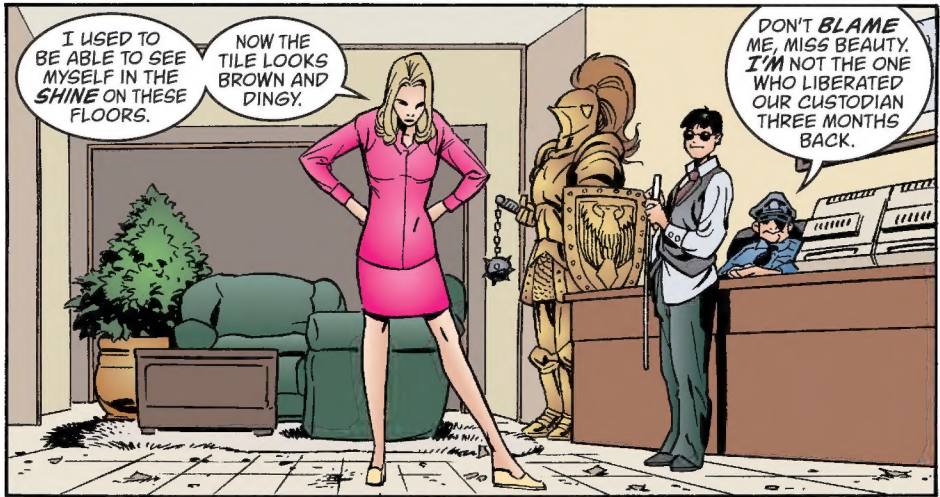




THIS PLACE IS A MESS!



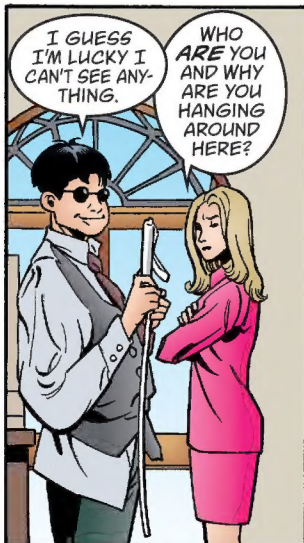
IT'S TURNING INTO AN ABSOLUTE PIGSTY!



I USED TO BE ABLE TO SEE MYSELF IN THE SHINE ON THESE FLOORS.

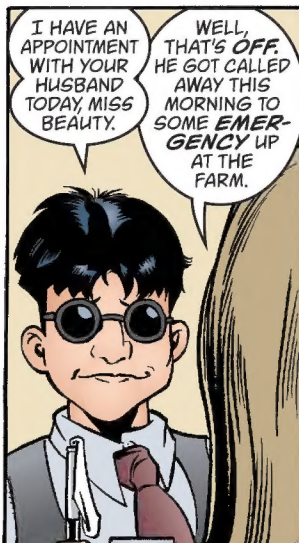
NOW THE TILE LOOKS BROWN AND DINGY.

DON'T BLAME ME, MISS BEAUTY. I'M NOT THE ONE WHO LIBERATED OUR CUSTODIAN THREE MONTHS BACK.



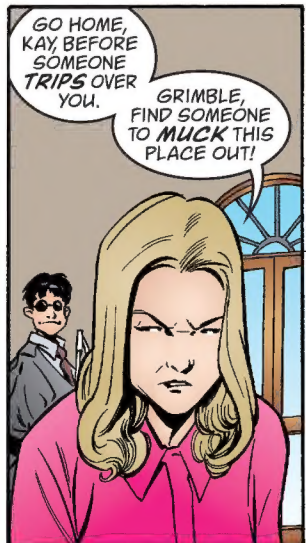
I GUESS I'M LUCKY I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING.

WHO ARE YOU AND WHY ARE YOU HANGING AROUND HERE?



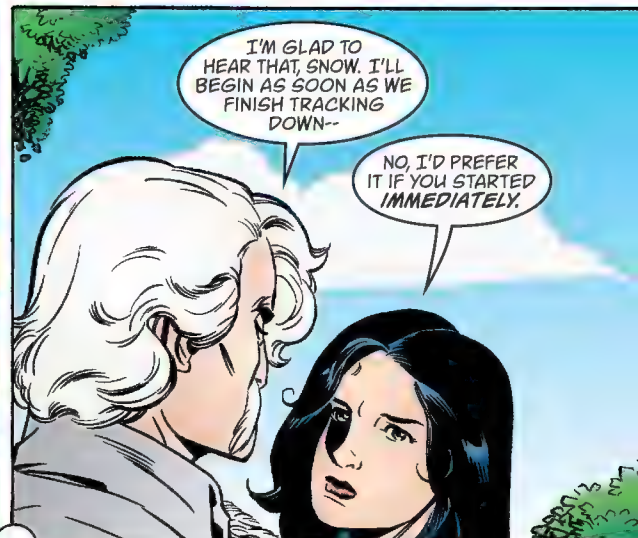
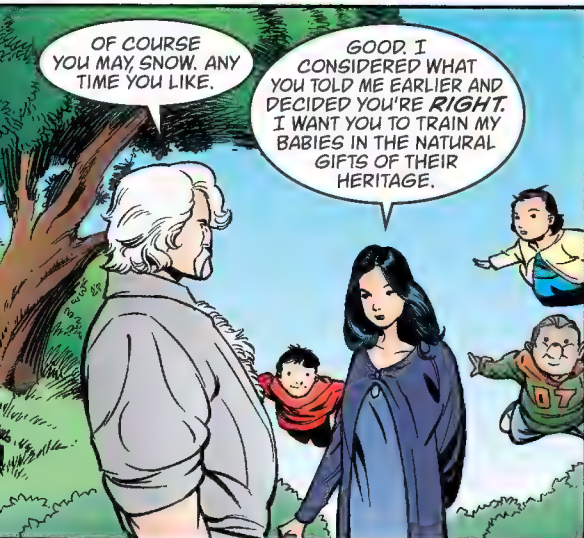
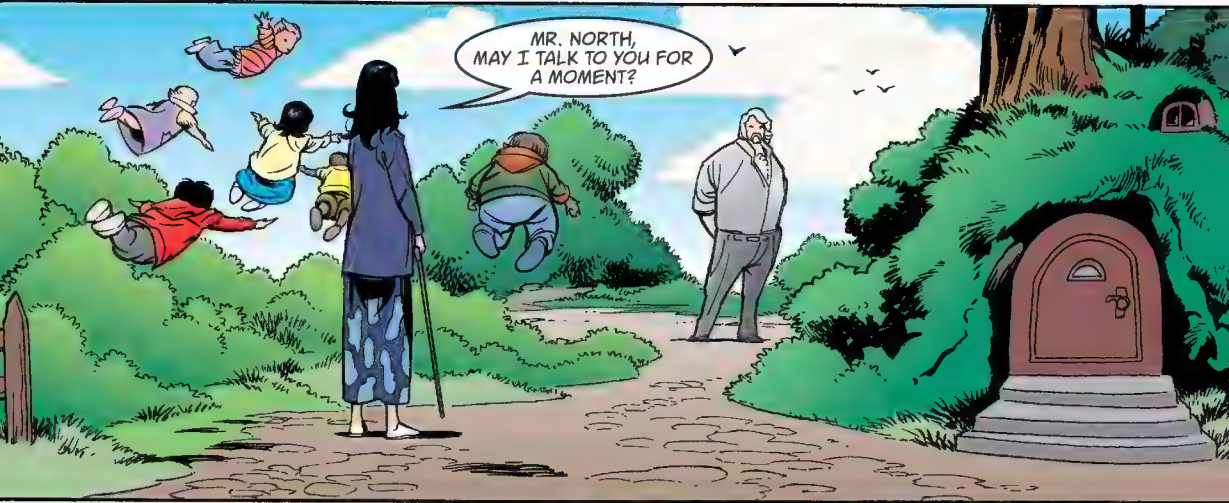
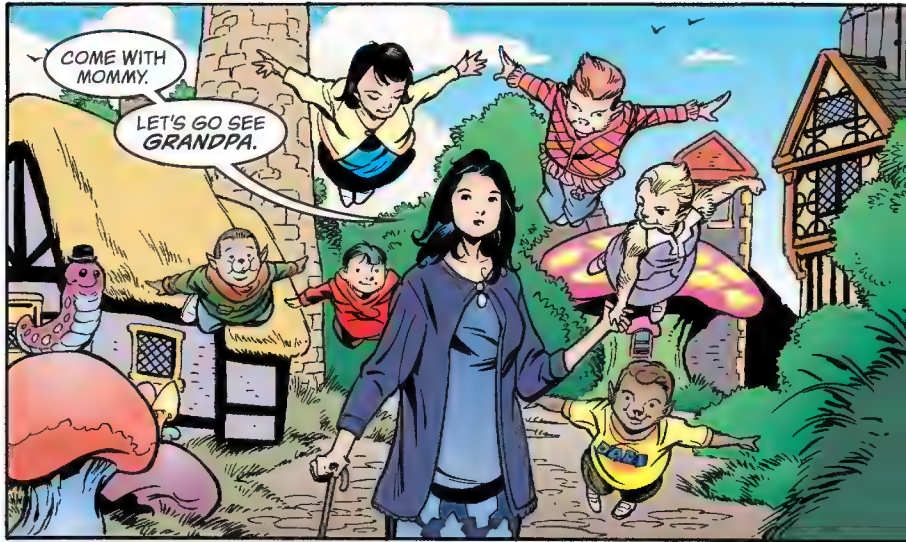
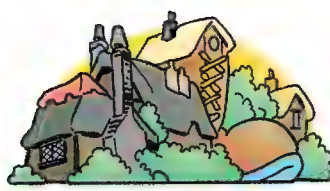
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR HUSBAND TODAY, MISS BEAUTY.

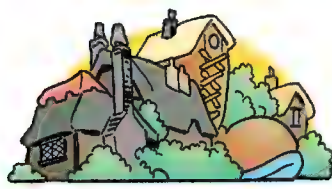
WELL, THAT'S OFF. HE GOT CALLED AWAY THIS MORNING TO SOME EMERGENCY UP AT THE FARM.



GO HOME, KAY, BEFORE SOMEONE TRIPS OVER YOU.

GRIMBLE, FIND SOMEONE TO MUCK THIS PLACE OUT!



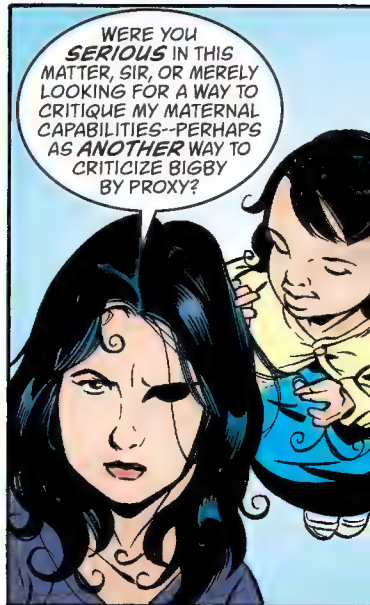


BUT THIS REALLY ISN'T THE TIME TO--

THIS IS *EXACTLY* THE TIME, SIR. YOU SAID YOURSELF THEY'RE ALREADY *FAR* BEHIND IN *ESSENTIAL* LESSONS, AND ALREADY IN DANGER OF *LOSING* THESE ABILITIES ENTIRELY.



YES, BUT--



WERE YOU *SERIOUS* IN THIS MATTER, SIR, OR MERELY LOOKING FOR A WAY TO CRITIQUE MY MATERNAL CAPABILITIES--PERHAPS AS *ANOTHER* WAY TO CRITICIZE BIGBY BY PROXY?



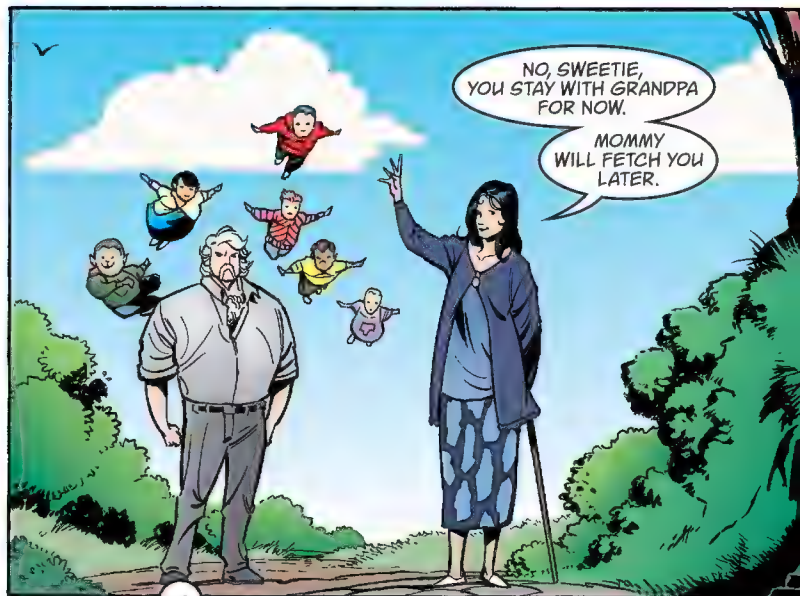
OF COURSE I WAS SERIOUS! I'M *ALWAYS* SERIOUS!

GOOD, THEN I'LL GET OUT OF YOUR WAY, DARLINGS, STAY WITH GRANDPA, OKAY?



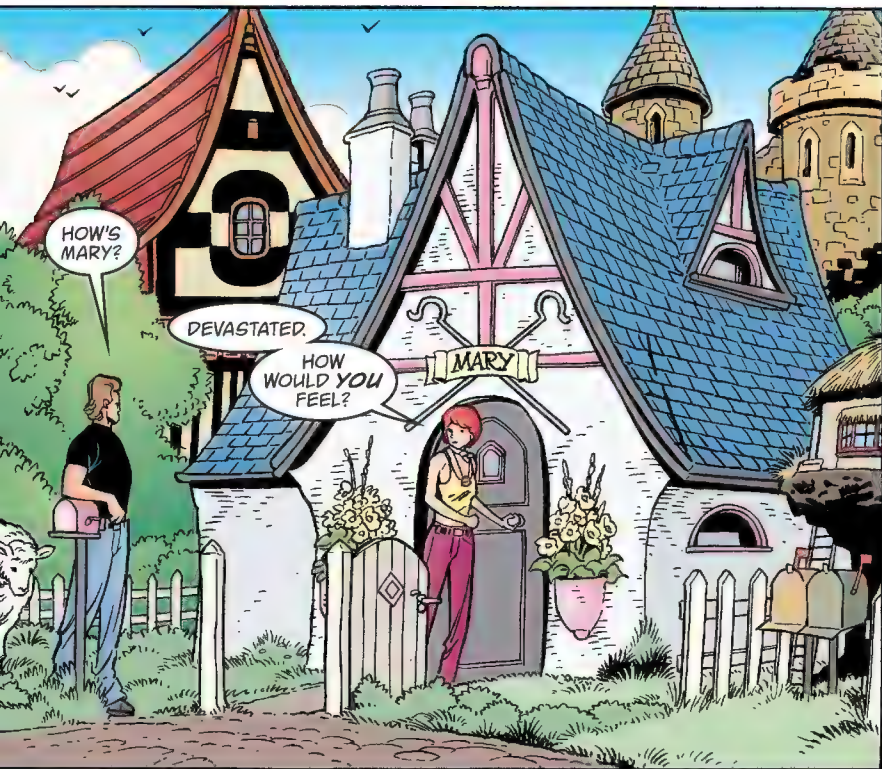
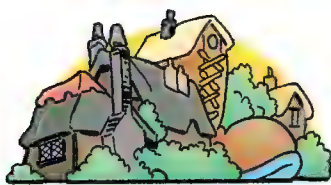
TRUTH IS I'M *RELIEVED* THEY'LL BE WITH YOU--UNDER YOUR *PROTECTION*--WHILE THIS INVISIBLE KILLER MAY BE LURKING ABOUT.

A MOST PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION, SNOW.



NO, SWEETIE, YOU STAY WITH GRANDPA FOR NOW.

MOMMY WILL FETCH YOU LATER.



HOW'S MARY?

DEVASTATED.

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL?



NOTED. SO STINKY MENTIONED YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ME--ABOUT SOMETHING NOT RELATED TO THE LATEST MURDER?

IT CAN WAIT.

I DON'T WANT TO *DISTRACT* YOU FROM YOUR INVESTIGATION.



I'VE GOT *NOTHING* TO DO. EITHER MR. NORTH AND HIS BOYS CAN CATCH IT, OR THEY CAN'T, BUT I CAN'T DO DOODLY-SQUAT TO *HELP* THEM.

SO, WHAT'S UP?

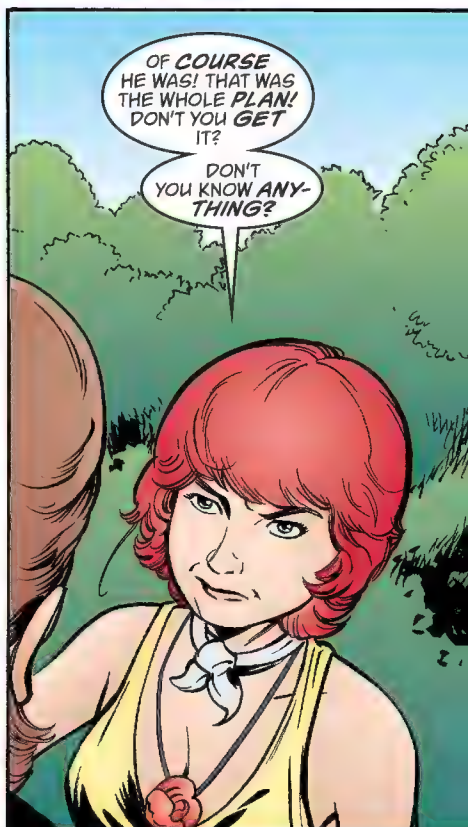
WHY DID YOU *FIRE* FLYCATCHER?



FLYCATCHER? WHY ARE WE SUDDENLY TALKING ABOUT *HIM*?

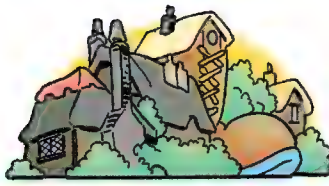
AND FOR THE RECORD I DIDN'T FIRE HIM. I SET HIM *FREE*.

BIGBY WAS KEEPING THE POOR SUCKER IN PERPETUAL SERVITUDE.



OF *COURSE* HE WAS! THAT WAS THE WHOLE *PLAN*! DON'T YOU *GET* IT?

DON'T YOU KNOW *ANYTHING*?



APPARENTLY NOT. ENLIGHTEN ME.

FLYCATCHER **LOVES** HIS JOB. HE KEEPS EVERYTHING CLEAN AND WORKING IN THE WOODLAND BUILDING. HE'S **IMPORTANT**, BECAUSE EVERYONE COUNTS ON HIM.



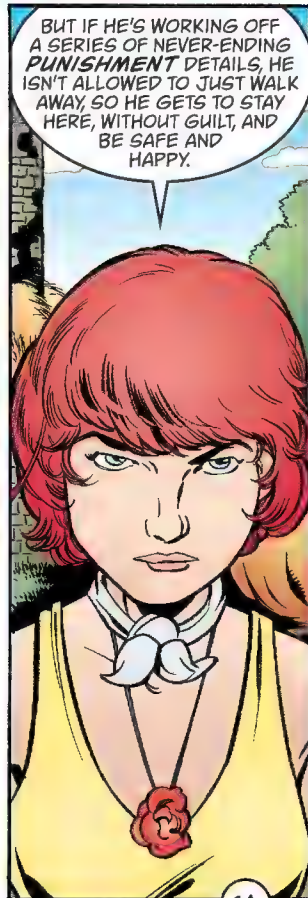
YOU TOOK ALL THAT AWAY FROM HIM.

SO, WE'LL GIVE HIM HIS **JOB** BACK, BUT THIS TIME AT A GOOD WAGE, NOT BY PILING UP COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS ON HIM BECAUSE OF A RIDICULOUS SERIES OF **MINOR** INFRACTIONS.



NO, NO, NO, THAT'S NOT THE WAY IT WORKS.

IF FLY HAS A JOB HE CAN KEEP OR QUIT AT HIS OWN WHIM, THEN HE **HAS** TO QUIT, SO HE CAN TRY TO GET BACK TO THE HOMELANDS, TO FIND HIS **WIFE** AND **KIDS**.



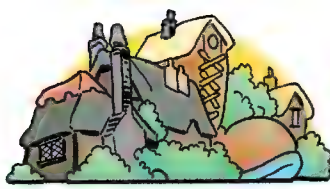
BUT IF HE'S WORKING OFF A SERIES OF NEVER-ENDING **PUNISHMENT** DETAILS, HE ISN'T ALLOWED TO JUST WALK AWAY, SO HE GETS TO STAY HERE, WITHOUT GUILT, AND BE SAFE AND HAPPY.



DAMN. I DIDN'T THINK OF IT THAT WAY.

I NEVER **KNEW**.

BIGBY HAD IT ALL WORKED OUT, YEARS AGO. DIDN'T HE **TELL** YOU?



HE TOLD ME TO ALWAYS KEEP BUSTING FLY FOR EATING FLIES, BUT NEVER EXPLAINED WHY. I JUST ASSUMED FLY WAS ANOTHER ONE OF HIS WHIPPING BOYS--LIKE JACK.

AND THEY LET YOU BE SHERIFF?

OKAY, I'LL EAT MY FAIR SHARE OF HUMBLE PIE, LADY, BUT DON'T GET **SNOTTY**.

CLARA TOLD ME THAT VULCO TOLD HER THAT FLY'S BEEN LIVING IN THE **EGGMAN'S** BASEMENT.

HE EARNS HIS COT BY CLEANING UP AT NIGHT, BUT DURING THE DAY HE'S CONSTANTLY **ASKING** ALL THE CUSTOMERS IF THEY KNOW OF A GATE STILL OPEN TO THE HOMELANDS.

CLARA AND VULCO?

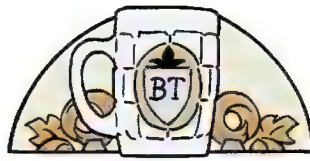
THEY'RE DATING.

BUT DON'T CHANGE THE SUBJECT. YOU NEED TO MARCH RIGHT HOME AND **ARREST** FLY AGAIN.

I WILL, AS SOON AS THIS CASE IS--

RIGHT AWAY! BEFORE HE **LEAVES**, OR DOES SOME OTHER STUPID THING!

YOU SAID YOURSELF YOU'RE **USELESS** ON THIS CASE, ANYWAY.



BIGBY'S GONE.

SNOW'S GONE.

BLUE'S GONE.

JACK'S GONE.

BRANSTOCK TAVERN



COLE GOT HIMSELF BOUNCED OUT OF OFFICE. IT'S ALL GOING TO **PIECES**, ISN'T IT?

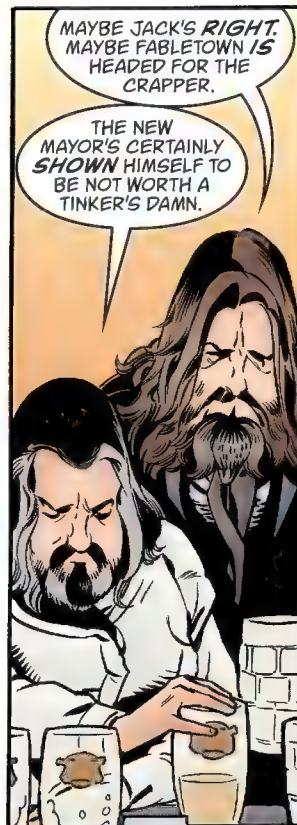
JACK'S GONE TOO?

YEAH. TOOK OFF LAST YEAR. DIDN'T YOU NOTICE HE WASN'T **AROUND** ANYMORE?



I JUST **ASSUMED** HE'D GOTTEN CAUGHT DOING ONE OF HIS **SCHEMES**, AND GOT HIMSELF LOCKED AWAY IN THE WOODLAND BASEMENT AGAIN.

NAW, HE **CUT OUT**, SAID FABLETOWN WAS **FINISHED** AND THEN HIT THE ROAD.

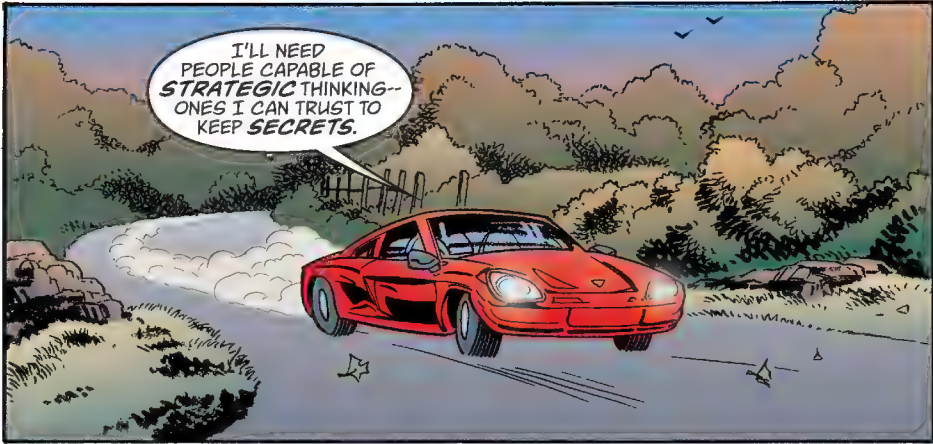
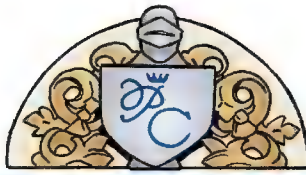


MAYBE JACK'S **RIGHT**. MAYBE FABLETOWN IS HEADED FOR THE CRAPPER.

THE NEW **MAYOR'S** CERTAINLY **SHOWN** HIMSELF TO BE NOT WORTH A TINKER'S DAMN.



AMEN TO THAT, BROTHER.



I'LL NEED PEOPLE CAPABLE OF STRATEGIC THINKING--ONES I CAN TRUST TO KEEP **SECRETS**.



SO LET YOURSELF INTO BIGBY'S--SORRY, INTO **BEAST'S** OFFICE AND PULL HIS FILES ON THE TOURISTS.

YES YOU DO SO KNOW OF THE TOURISTS, BEAUTY. THEY'RE THOSE THREE **SPIES** THE SHERIFF HAS, WHO KEEP TABS ON ALL THE FABLES LIVING ABROAD.



ACTUALLY, SINCE I'M THE GODDAMNED MAYOR NOW, THEY'RE THE THREE SPIES I HAVE.

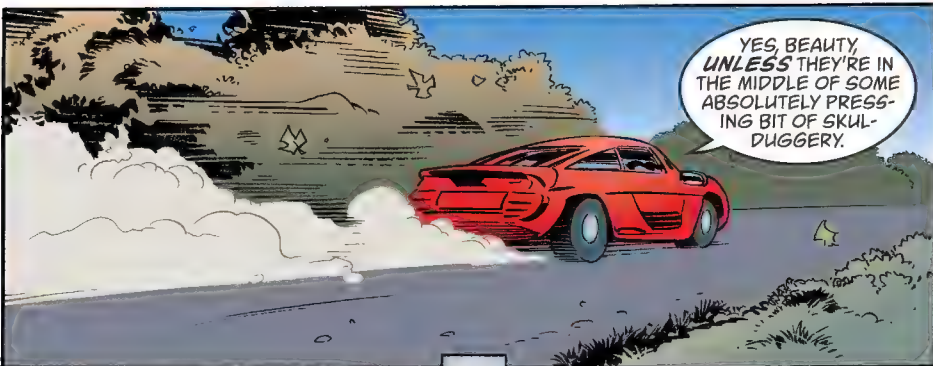
SO LET'S HAUL THEM **HOME** AND PUT THEM TO SOME **REAL** WORK.



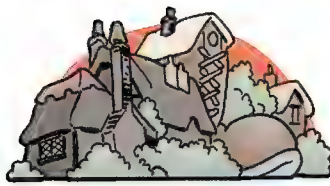
THERE SHOULD BE CONTACT NUMBERS FOR EACH OF THEM.

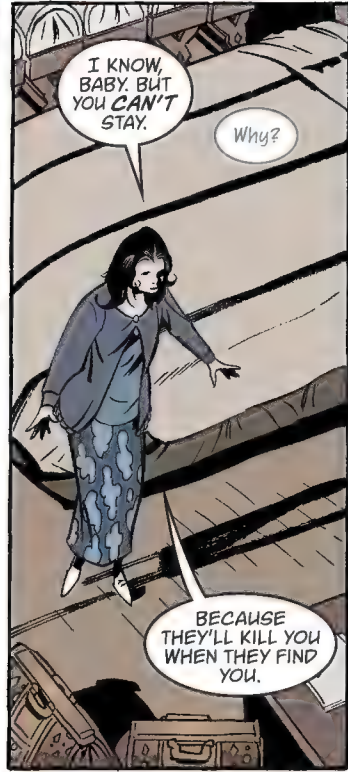
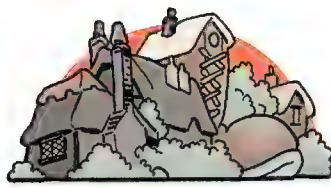
HOW SHOULD I KNOW? SOMEWHERE IN THEIR FILES.

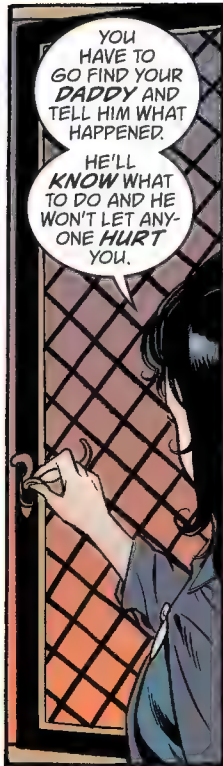
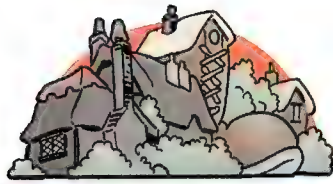
CALL THEM UP AND **ORDER** EACH OF THEM TO GET ON THE NEXT FLIGHT HOME--TOURIST CLASS.



YES BEAUTY, **UNLESS** THEY'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF SOME ABSOLUTELY PRESSING BIT OF SKUL-DUGGERY.

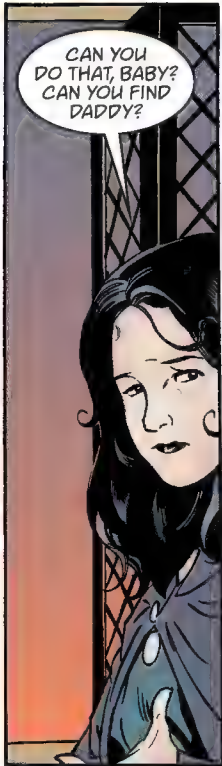




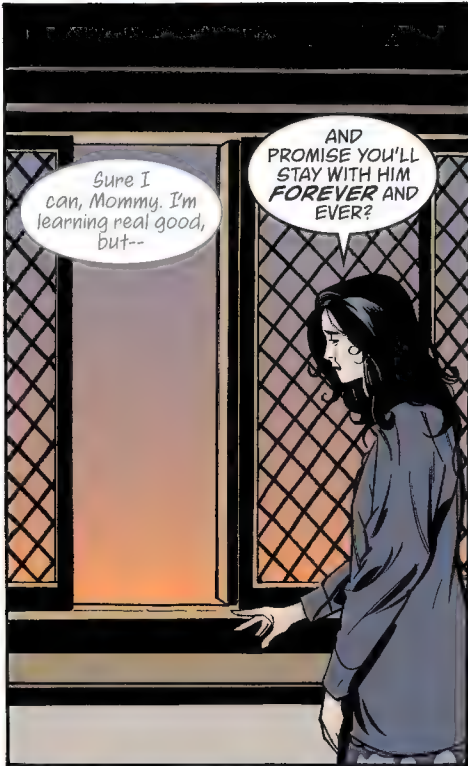


YOU HAVE TO GO FIND YOUR **DADDY** AND TELL HIM WHAT HAPPENED.

HE'LL **KNOW** WHAT TO DO AND HE WON'T LET ANYONE **HURT** YOU.



CAN YOU DO THAT, BABY? CAN YOU FIND DADDY?



Sure I can, Mommy. I'm learning real good, but--

AND PROMISE YOU'LL STAY WITH HIM **FOREVER** AND **EVER**?



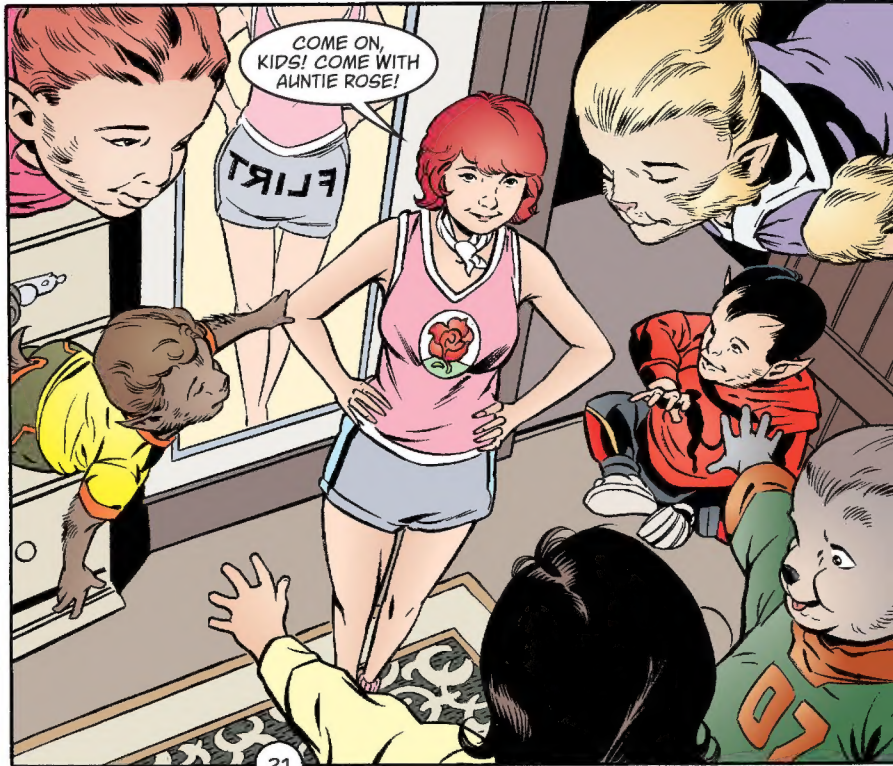
I'm sorry I was bad, Mommy.

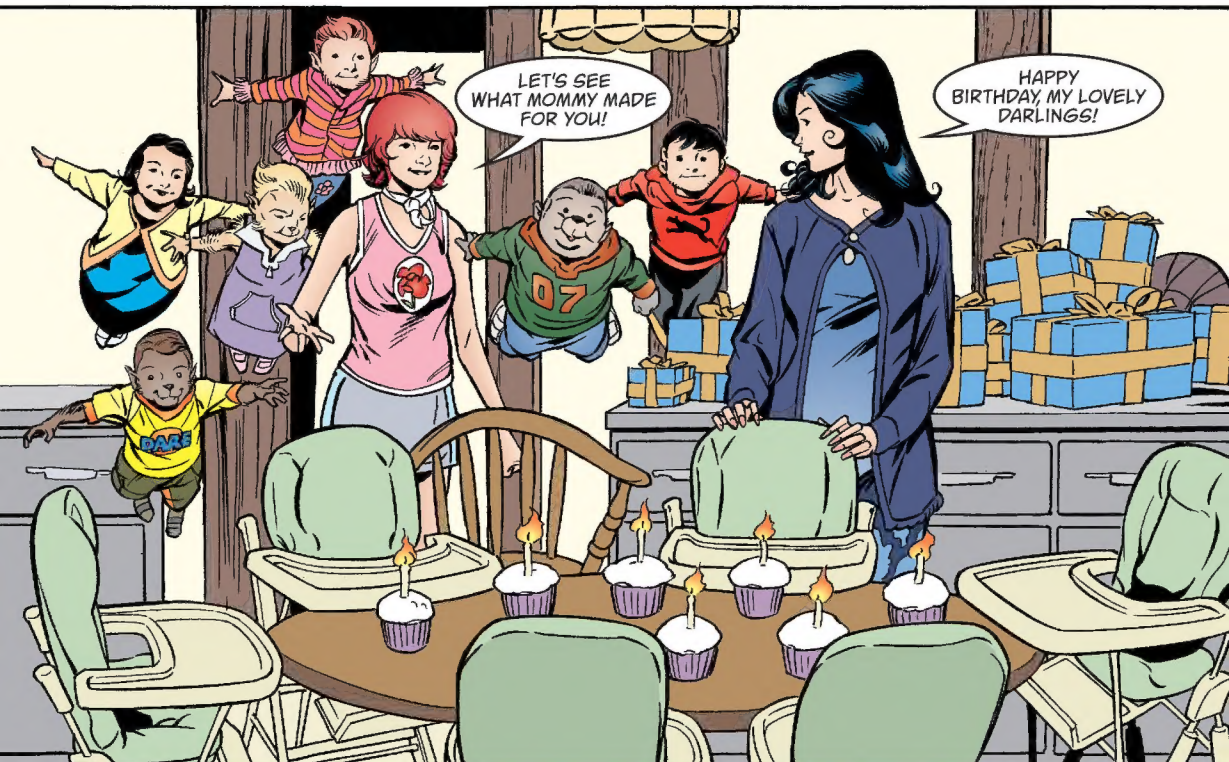


HURRY AND GO, **FAST** AS YOU CAN!



BEFORE THEY CATCH YOU.





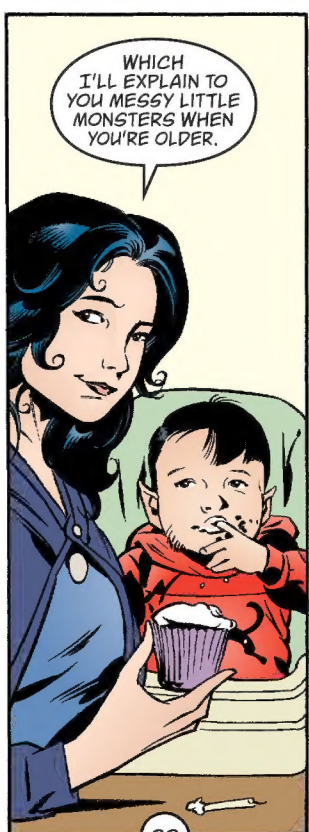
LET'S SEE WHAT MOMMY MADE FOR YOU!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MY LOVELY DARLINGS!



SEVEN BIRTHDAY CAKES, SNOW?

YUP. I'M STARTING A NEW FAMILY TRADITION.



WHICH I'LL EXPLAIN TO YOU MESSY LITTLE MONSTERS WHEN YOU'RE OLDER.



NOW LET'S OPEN PRESENTS!

The cruel, hot summer led into the long, hard fall, becoming the dark, killing winter, until spring replenished us all.

— traditional nursery rhyme

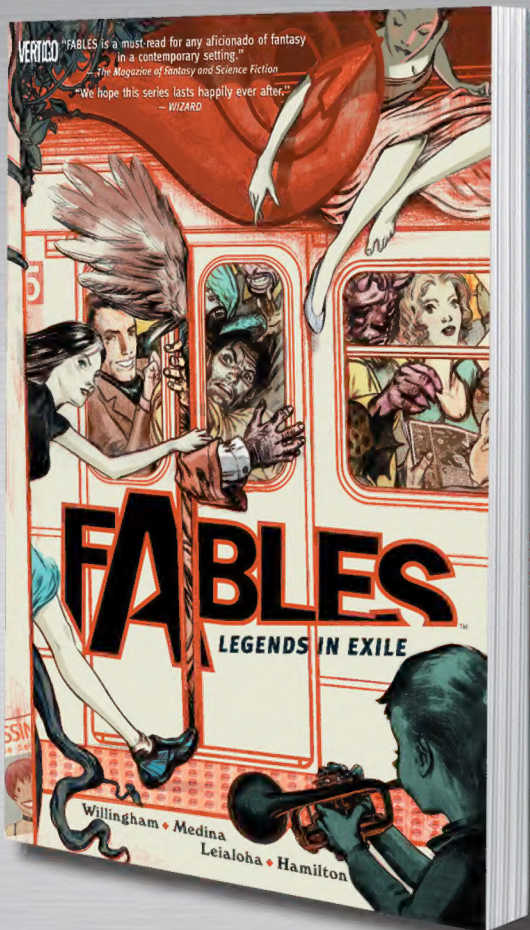
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BILL WILLINGHAM

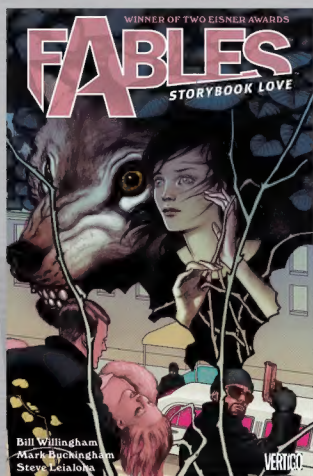
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."
– THE WASHINGTON POST



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- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
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- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



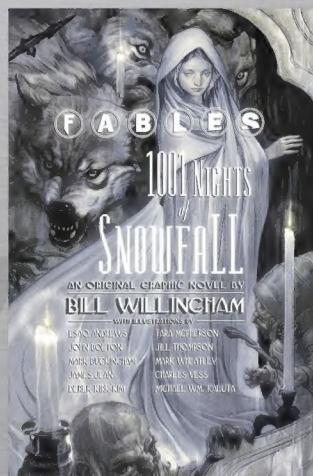
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